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ABSTRACT

The Reading Improvement Services Everywhere (RISE) project was launched by the National PTA so that PTA's throughout the nation could participate in the federally initiated Right-to-Read effort. It is felt that the parents are responsible to see that the child's learning motivation and readiness are well developed. Project RISE focuses on what can be done to assure reading readiness and early reading. The objectives include to contact the parents of preschool children, to encourage a personal library in the home, and to call for involvement of PTA and education agency teams in the development phase of the project. The local PTA's will learn what the schools are doing in the area of reading improvement, support the schools by disseminating information, and help all parents to understand the objectives to be accomplished. Able volunteers can offer help in the classroom, the library, and in promoting the program. (AW)

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PARENTS AND READING: READING AS A BASIC RIGHT

THE PTA PROJECT RISE , Mrs. LeRoy A. Woodward, National PTA

When former U.S. Commissioner of Education, James E. Allen, Jr. stated that the nation's education goal for the Seventies, The Right To Read shall be a reality for all, the National PTA launched Project RISE so that PTAs throughout the nation could participate in the federally initiated Right-To-Read effort.

Project RISE is Reading Improvement Services Everywhere - hence the name RISE.

Until very recently, it was believed that a child's intelligence was fixed at birth and that nothing could be done to stimulate or depress it. Science is now challenging this assumption.

Psychologists have demonstrated that what a child sees, hears, and learns before the age of four largely determines his basic intelligence at maturity.

Researchers have found that children who learn to read before they are six years of age generally maintain their lead in school and sometimes do exceptionally well. Also that early learning can prevent serious difficulties later in school.

As much as 50 percent of a child's mental development takes place before the age of six. Between birth and age six, his ability to change is astounding. The conclusion is that all normal children can therefore be helped to develop a more powerful intellignece. Hence - the emphasis on early childhood education.

This places a great responsibility on parents - namely raising their children's potential intelligence during the crucial early years.

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The young child was the inspiration that prompted the conception of the PTA organization, and pre-school service continues to be the beginning of all PTA concern.

The major focus of Project RISE is on what can be done to assure reading readiness and reading in early childhood.

The objectives are:

1. To understand some assumptions about learning to read and causes of reading failure.

2. Identify possible obstacles to be overcome and develop relationships in providing volunteer reading services.

3. Develop alternative strategies for providing volunteer services as a means of improving reading services for younger children.

Parents of pre-school children must be reached through the work of the PTA Pre-school Service Committee. Often this is difficult because the PTA and the school have limited channels for contacting such parents before the children are registered for kindergarten or first grade.

It is in the home where the child first learns (or does not learn) about reading and books. It has been said that reading readiness begins at the mother's knee, but now it has been moved to the mother's lap and is known as lap reading which not only affords an opportunity for reading, but also provides a way for the child to receive love, affection and security.

Children love poetry. This is noted in the young children's response to the reading of nursery rhymes. The rhythm of the sounds, words, and phrases that are almost musical and since music is the universal language of man it is no wonder that the children love the rhymes.

It is through the stimulation of reading that the child learns a love for reading. The child must also grow up seeing the parents read. If

parents do not function as models for reading, how can children and youth feel that reading is important.

It is also in the home where the child begins his personal library. Through gifts of books he learns to hold a book, turn pages and learns to take care of it - thus feeling pride in his own possession as well as forming good reading habits which in turn speed up the learning process and in addition offer a relaxing past time.

The work of the National PTA committee on Reading and Library Service embraces the encouragement of a personal library in the home, a library in every elementary and high school to be manned by a professional librarian, and adequate library service through its public library for all citizens throughout the country.

After formal schooling has ended - whether it is fifth grade or college - the public library is the only agency where one can go for any information on any subject at anytime and find it quickly.

The implementation of Project RISE calls for the involvement of PTA and education agency team in the development of a specific plan. Needed will be:

1. firm commitment by all
2. survey of needs
3. selection of an activity which will meet the needs
4. determine the mechanics of the project
5. set goals and timetable
6. make progress reports.

As the PTA works with the professional educators, there will be an exploration of methods for working together. Conceivably, steps will be to:

evaluate

diagnose

prescribe

and then the application - and in the application the PTA will hopefully implement READING IMPROVEMENT SERVICES EVERYWHERE.

As volunteers, the PTA will learn and understand what the schools are doing in the area of reading improvement. Support the schools by disseminating the information and help all parents to understand the objectives to be accomplished. Volunteers with possible in-service training can serve in the classrooms as aides to the teachers, arrange field trips to the public library, in the school library as a clerk or secretary helping to process books, promote summer reading programs, make additional book collection of hardbacks or paper backs available for student use, etc.

In the purpose of Project RISE, the PTA emerges again as an organization of service. In the implementation of Project RISE, the PTA member emerges as the logical person to do the job. He is knowledgeable about his school and as a citizen and taxpayer is the key person who can exert the greatest influence in the community.

It is the hope of the National PTA that before this decade is out - there will be --READING IMPROVEMENT SERVICES EVERYWHERE

---- that all may read.